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ABSTRACT

The survey step in the SQ3R study reading strategy consists of scanning the reading material and its organizational features to establish the nature/magnitude of the reading task and to formulate guidelines for accomplishing that task. When the chapters of six history textbooks were examined for the presence, absence, and number of organizational features comprising the survey step, however, a wide range and variation in the use of those features were apparent. This variability in textbooks has implications for textbook selection and classroom instruction. When selecting textbooks, it is important to consider how the student will be reading the text. Since surveying is believed to be a viable, effective strategy in studying, students should develop this skill in material which does not overwhelm them. Members of textbook selection committees should try surveying chapters of a proposed textbook to make sure that students are not handicapped by the lack or preponderance of certain text features. Once a textbook is selected, teachers should provide the students with a general introduction to the text, its features, and study strategies for dealing with the text. (RL)

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"Surveying: Is it Easily Applied in Today's Textbooks?"

Evelyn Jackson

Armed with information about reading and thinking skills, reading teachers are confident when recommending strategies for study reading that are best typified by Francis Robinson's (1962) approach known as SQ3R-survey, question, read, recite and review. Robinson proposed SQ3R for study reading after examining the formats of textbooks and concluding that the reader's comprehension and concentration could be enhanced if the task were approached systematically and efficiently.

Robinson's approach has become very popular and is frequently the backbone of what is recommended for textbook reading in secondary and post-secondary reading improvement classes (Taylor, 1975; Blake, 1973; Flemming, 1978; Brown, 1975; Smith, 1972; Norman, 1976; Judson, 1972; Carman and Adams, 1972; and Wood, 1978). Some author's have represented the approach by different titles but the rationale in the descriptions is the same: the reader surveys to quickly find out what's in store for him/her; questions are formulated which are to be answered in the reading; the student reads to answer the questions, the material is recited to recall what was read; and later, the material is reviewed for longer-term memory.

Tadlock (1978) in explaining the success of SQ3R relates it to an information processing theory of learning and states, "Each component

of the SQ3R procedure for independent study is designed to facilitate the processing of incoming information (print) so the reader can deal with more of it and deal with it more effectively." (Tadlock, 1978).

The first step of SQ3R, survey, is the item of interest. Surveying should be done when a reader is faced with any material which is new to him/her. Books, chapters of textbooks, articles, and pamphlets, are surveyed so that the reader can quickly establish what the task will be all about and formulate one or more purposes for reading the material. There are suggestions for what is involved in surveying each of the above-mentioned pieces of material, let's further focus our attention on surveying a textbook chapter. Since chapters of textbooks have similar features it is reasonable to recommend that a student do the following when making a survey:

1. read the chapter title
2. read the introduction, if there is one
3. read the headings and subheadings
4. read questions built into the text, if there are any
5. read all graphic aids which are placed throughout the chapter; understanding the message as it is graphically given will make the reading task easier
6. note new vocabulary terms which may be italicized or in bold face print
7. read the summary and questions at the end of the chapter

After making this kind of a survey a student should understand what the chapter encompasses. It will be easier to understand the purposes for reading and subsequently comprehend what is deemed important.

The Problem

While the recommended plan appears reasonable, questions remain: Does the procedure match current textbook formats? Are they structured

for surveying to be an effective approach easily applied in study-reading? In an attempt to answer the questions, parallel chapters of six popular American History texts were reviewed and compared. In each book the chapter on Andrew Jackson and Jacksonian Democracy was selected for analysis. The following factors were noted for each book: 1) the presence or absence of an introduction, 2) the number of headings, 3) the number of subheadings, 4) the number of questions incorporated into the text, 5) the number of diagrams and charts, 6) the number of illustrations and photos, 7) the number of maps, 8) the presence or absence of a summary and, 9) the manner in which new vocabulary words are highlighted in the text through the use of bold-face print or italics. In addition, four other chapter features were surveyed: 1) the number of asides (personality profiles, anecdotes), 2) the length of each chapter, 3) the presence or absence of a chapter review and, 4) the readability level of each book (Table 1).

TABLE 1
Frequency of Items to be Surveyed in Six American History Textbook Chapters

	Introduction	Headings	Sub-Headings	Questions Built Into Text	Diagrams/ Charts	Illustrations/ Photos	Maps	Summary	Vocabulary Boldface	Vocabulary Italics	Asides	Chapter Review	Pages	Readability Level
A	+*	6	11	0	2	4	0	None	None	+	0	+	9	10th
B	+	5	16	26	0	12	5	None	None	None	4	+	15	14th
C	None	15	0	0	2	8	1	None	None	None	0	None	20	13th
D	+	6	39	25	3	8	0	+	None	+	3	+	21	12th
E[1]	None	3**	7	9	7	7	1	+	None	None	1	+	21	12th
F	+	6**	26	0	6	16	4	None	None	+	1	+	34	13th

1 39 sub sub-headings
* plus pre-reading questions
** with introductions after the headings

The Smog formula (McLaughlin, 1969) was used to approximate the readability level of the books because readability is often a factor which is considered by textbook evaluation committees when selecting new books (Harker, 1977;

Krause, 1976; Jevitz and Meints, 1979). The conflict surrounding readability formulas is acknowledged (Aukerman, 1972) however, the information is included here to demonstrate the importance of looking beyond a grade-level readability designation.

Discussion

All the chapters had titles so no category for checking the existence of titles was necessary in the analysis. It is understood that the title is the first piece of information that a reader considers. Upon reading the title, it is recommended that a reader reflect on what may already be known about the topic; this suggestion carries over into the reading of all headings and subheadings. After recalling what is known, the reader is advised to turn the title into a question which can be answered during the reading. The process focuses the reader's attention, enhances concentration and prepares one for active reading.

Four of the six texts had introductions to the chapter. Of the four introductions the one in Book A also featured main idea pre-reading questions. Having questions added to an introduction provides a helpful example for a teacher to highlight subsequent reading which can be done to answer questions.

All of the chapters were divided into sections with headings and five of the six chapters had subheadings. One text, Book E, had 39 sub-subheadings. Totaling the columns provides a better perspective of the task. If a reader were to only consider headings and subheadings, surveying could range from reading 15 elements within 20 pages to 49 elements within 21 pages. Regardless of their substance, in number alone they constitute several items to process.

Three of the texts incorporated questions into the chapter. These can be helpful in guiding a student through the chapter. Teachers can point out how the reader can monitor comprehension if the questions can be answered after reading. During a survey of a chapter, questions can also be helpful in guiding a reader's attention as to the section's purpose. Students seldom set their own purposes for reading a textbook; assignments usually reflect the teacher's purpose which often comes from a manual or lesson guide. Considering number alone, there may be a point of diminishing return. Book D not only has 45 headings and subheadings to survey, it also features 25 questions which would be read if a student followed the recommendations of a survey.

No text was without visual aids. It is interesting to compare the treatment by six publishers of the same topic in American History. For one publisher the chapter merited six diagrams/charts, 16 illustrations/photos, and four maps within 34 pages. For another, it was enough to have two diagrams/charts, four illustrations/photos and no maps within nine pages. The bottom line of these decisions is economic, it costs more to have more visual aids. But aside from the expense, consider what it means to a reader surveying the chapter. The comprehension of the visuals can ease the task of reading the text, especially if it is written at a high readability level (Wood, 1978; Adams, 1970).

Only two of the six texts, D and E, had summaries at the end of the chapter. Reading a summary is often a good introduction to the whole and is considered a worthwhile part of doing a survey. The two texts with summaries also have the most number of different elements to process. Instead of a student considering 81 different elements in Book D or 73 different elements in Book E, it may be that the summary would provide a better perspective of the chapter.

Surprisingly little was done to highlight vocabulary in any of the texts. This is not to say that terms were not explained in context or featured in lists in chapter reviews. They often were. The point is that during a survey, the reader would not be able to roughly assess new vocabulary. Checking the vocabulary load enables a reader to determine the relative difficulty of the task ahead.

Some publishers made an effort to make American history more real for the students by putting in personality profiles or vignettes called asides in this analysis. If these features are present it is the teacher's responsibility to explain their relevance to the reading of the chapter.

Implications

The above description of the various features of chapters in selected American History books has implications for two facets of the educational scene: textbook selection and classroom instruction. Various authors' guidelines for selection of textbooks have many features in common (Harker, 1977; Krause, 1976; Jevits and Meints, 1979). Consideration is usually given to readability level, concept load, author information, organization, format and style, the teacher's manual, quality of workmanship and cost. When evaluating format and style, it is important to look at what it means for the student who will be reading the text. It is the author's belief that surveying is a viable, effective strategy in study reading. Students should be able to develop this skill in material which does not overwhelm them in the process. Members of selection committees should try surveying a chapter of a book under consideration and ask themselves these questions:

1) How long does it take to effectively survey the chapter? 2) How many elements (headings, questions, graphics) are included? 3) Is it easy to grasp the intent and extent of the chapter material? 4) Are there questions built into the text which would effectively guide the reader? 5) Are new vocabulary terms highlighted? 6) Can our students be expected to efficiently survey this material?

Instructional implications are most obvious for implementation at the beginning of a school year. Every teacher with a textbook to introduce should make a survey of the book part of the introduction. At the same time, how to read the textbook should be stressed. A teacher has the information and experience necessary to establish the objectives of reading the text. To aid readers in reaching the objectives, they should not only be given a study reading approach such as SQ3R, but should be walked through it, if necessary. A teacher's guidance is vital. As in the development of any skill, students might find it cumbersome and time consuming and be reluctant to pursue it. Structure and teacher assistance need to be provided so that students can experience success. Surveying is a skill which can be used throughout a reader's lifetime, it is worth the investment.

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